

Germany seek to repair reputation



Germany's Manuel Neuer bends to his left to gather the ball during Saturday's training session at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. (Reuters)

Boston: Germany will look to start their World Cup campaign with a big win over Curacao, with the four-time champions out to repair their damaged international reputation following first-round exits in the previous two editions.

The Germans, who won the 2014 edition, have set their sights on a fifth world title even though they do not see themselves as among the favourites this year.

GROUP E

They could not have hoped for easier first opponents than minnows Curacao, the smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup. Ecuador and Ivory Coast complete Group E.

Julian Nagelsmann's Germany are on a nine-match winning run, including a 4-0 victory over Finland in their last friendly at home on May

STATS ASSIST 

**Head-to-head
First meeting**

Form factor

Germany	W W W W W
Curacao	W L L L D

 **Sunday, 10.30pm IST,**
Unite8 Sports Network & Zee5

31 and a 2-1 win over the US six days ago.

Curacao are rank outsiders, with most of their players plying their trade in the Netherlands or in lower European leagues.

But veteran coach Dick Advocaat, who at 78 will become the oldest coach in tournament history, relishes facing Germany in their tournament start.

"Starting against Germa-

ny is fantastic. We will find out immediately where we stand," Advocaat said.

Meteoric rise

Germany forward Deniz Undav's imminent debut on Sunday was not even a distant dream four years ago but the 29-year-old is now ready to crown his unusual career with a presence on the biggest football stage of all.

Undav, who looked to have dropped out of contention for a spot when he was not called up for matches in 2025, is now the team's in-form striker.

Four years ago he was plying his trade in the Belgian second division and World Cup participation looked a distant prospect.

"When I think about where I was just four years ago I could not have imagined I would be here," Undav said.

Reuters